From Law to Spirituality: Al-Ghazali's Contribution to the Concept of Religious Moderation

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how the concept of religious moderation is implicitly embedded in the kitab kuning, particularly within the figh-sufistic thought of Imam al-Ghazali. Unlike conventional fiqh, which focuses primarily on vertical obligations to God, al-Ghazali integrates external legal observance with internal spiritual ethics, establishing a comprehensive framework that connects ritual devotion with social responsibility. Methodologically, this research employs qualitative library research using Bidayat al-Hidayah and Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din as primary sources, analyzed through content analysis to identify ethical and social patterns that reflect moderation. The findings reveal twentythree ethical principles formulated by al-Ghazali, encompassing aspects such as companionship (alshuhbah), social etiquette, and moral conduct, all of which promote equality, inclusivity, and communal harmony. Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic ethics and moderation by situating al-Ghazali's figh-sufistic synthesis as an epistemological foundation for contextualizing religious behavior in plural societies. The originality of this research lies in its reinterpretation of classical Islamic ethics as practical indicators of religious moderation in the Indonesian context, offering new insights for curriculum development in pesantren, deradicalization programs, and civic education. While limited by its textual scope and lack of empirical validation, this study provides a theoretical basis for future field research examining the application of al-Ghazali's ethical framework in modern educational and social environments.

Keywords: Al-Ghazali, Figh-Sufi, Religious Moderation, Ibya' 'Ulum Al-Din, Content Analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation serves as a middle path in Indonesia's plural religious landscape, playing a crucial role in fostering national harmony amidst rising signs of disharmony in recent years. By instilling its values, society can cultivate mutual respect among followers of different faiths, allowing each community to practice its beliefs peacefully within a conducive environment. Importantly, religious moderation is not solely the domain of the government nor merely the product of state regulation. Rather, it represents a core aspect of human identity as both religious beings and citizens; thus, every citizen bears responsibility for sustaining it according to their roles and functions. In the contemporary Indonesian context, two persistent threats undermine this vision: extremism and liberalism. Surveys conducted by the Wahid Foundation (2017) and the Setara Institute (2018) reveal worrying patterns of intolerance, including growing exclusivism, rigid truth claims, and discriminatory practices that risk destabilizing interreligious harmony.² Extremism manifests through absolutism, blind fanaticism, and exclusivist perspectives that frequently culminate in takfir, while liberalism, if left unchecked, risks diluting shared values and weakening the normative authority of religion. Both tendencies have historically been linked to the decline of civilizations.³

In a different historical setting, a sharp intellectual tension once emerged in the Islamic world between fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and Sufism (taṣannuf), which led to a period of disharmony within Islamic civilization. Originally, fiqh (shari'ah) and Sufism (haqiqah) were two integrated yet distinct aspects of religious life, but over time a dichotomy developed, producing two opposing camps: the "people of the outward" (ahl al-zahir) and the "people of the inward" (ahl al-baṭin). The former focused narrowly on legal and ritual formalities, neglecting the spiritual dimension, while the latter were accused of disregarding law and formal norms in favor of esoteric spirituality. Al-Ghazali sought to reconcile this polarization through his magnum opus Ihya' "Ulum al-Din, in which he famously asserted that Sufism without fiqh is like a soul without a body, and fiqh without Sufism is like a body without a soul. His intellectual project, which may be termed fiqh-

¹ Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, Religious Moderation (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

² Wahid Foundation, Laporan Tahunan Kebebasan Beragama dan Toleransi di Indonesia (Jakarta, 2017); Setara Institute, Index Toleransi Kota-Kota di Indonesia 2018 (Jakarta: Setara Institute, 2018).

³ Muhammad ibn Shaykh Abd Karim Kasnazan, *Mansu'ah Kasnazaniyah* (Dar al_Mahabbah: Suriah, 2025).

⁴ Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2005), vol. 1, 12.

sufistic thought, integrates the legal and spiritual-ethical dimensions of Islam into a coherent framework.

This study employs *Bidayat al-Hidayah* and *Iḥyā' 'Ulum al-Dīn* as its primary sources because they are particularly representative of al-Ghazali's synthesis. The *Bidayat* functions as a concise manual of ethics and proper conduct (*adab*) for daily religious practice, while the *Iḥya'* constitutes a comprehensive encyclopedic work that systematically integrates law, theology, and Sufism.⁵ Together, these texts not only illustrate al-Ghazali's reconciliation of fiqh and Sufism but also highlight his distinctive emphasis on ethics as the bridge between ritual and social life. By contrast, earlier scholarship on al-Ghazali's fiqh–Sufi thought has often remained partial, focusing either on doctrinal aspects or textual exposition without adequately contextualizing its relevance to contemporary challenges.⁶

This leaves a research gap in connecting al-Ghazālī's formulation of *adab* with measurable indicators of religious moderation, particularly in Indonesia, where pluralism and social cohesion are under pressure. While prior studies by Deswita,⁷ Masburiyah,⁸ Supriadi,⁹ and Bakir¹⁰ have contributed to the understanding of al-Ghazālī's thought, they tend to limit themselves to textual content analysis without correlating it to empirical realities of religious moderation in modern society.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following specific questions: (1) How does al-Ghazali formulate his fiqh-sufistic thought in *Bidayat al-Hidayah* and *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din?* (2) What ethical guidelines emerge from this synthesis, particularly the twenty-three principles of social interaction identified by al-Ghazali? (3) How can these formulations be operationalized as practical indicators of religious moderation in the Indonesian context? By situating al-Ghazali's fiqh-sufistic thought within contemporary debates on extremism, pluralism, and religious harmony, this research not only fills a scholarly gap but also provides practical insights for developing pesantren curricula, deradicalization initiatives, and civic education programs.

⁵ Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī, Bidayat al-Hidayah (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2004).

⁶ Abdul Kadir Riyadi, Arkeologi Tasawuf (Bandung: Mizan, 2016).

Deswita Deswita, "Konsepsi Al-Ghazali Tentang Fiqh Dan Tasawuf," Juris 13, no. 1 (2018).

⁸ Masburiyah Masburiyah, "Konsep Dan Sistematika Pemikiran Fiqih Sufistik Al-Ghazali," NALAR FIQH: Jurnal Hukum Islam 3, no. 1 (2011).

⁹ Dedi Supriadi, "Fiqih Bernuansa Tasawuf Al-Ghazali Perpaduan Antara Syari'at Dan Hakikat," Pustaka Setia, Bandung, 2008.

¹⁰ Moh Bakir, "Relasi Syari'at Dan Hakikat Perspektif Al-Ghazālī," KACA (Karunia Cahaya Allah): Jurnal Dialogis Ilmu Ushuluddin 9, no. 2 (2019).

METHOD

This study is a library research that primarily draws on two of al-Ghazali's works within the genre of fiqh and Sufism: Bidayat al-Hidayah and his magnum opus Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din. These primary sources are supported by secondary sources such as Muraqi al-Ubudiyah by Shaykh Muhammad Nawawi al-Bantani, Al-Luma' fi Tarikh al-Tasanwuf by Shaykh Abu Nasr al-Tusi, and Al-Muntakhabat fi Rabitah al-Qalbiyah wa Silah al-Ruhiyah by Shaykh Achmad Asrori al-Ishaqi. These texts are analyzed using content analysis, a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts based on their content. Since content analysis is employed, this research falls into the category of qualitative research, as noted by Soleymanpour the research examined textbooks and written materials that contained information about the target events, using case analysis and qualitative research methods for the document review process. It

In this research, the unit of analysis consists of paragraphs and thematic discussions of *adab* found in both *Bidayat al-Hidayah* and *Ibya' 'Ulum al-Din*. The coding process combined deductive categories (drawn from theoretical frameworks of religious moderation) and inductive categories (emerging directly from the texts). To ensure validity and reliability, coding was reviewed through supervision (audit trail by the advisor) and cross-checked against secondary literature on al-Ghazali to minimize subjective bias. ¹⁵ Regarding textual sources, the study employed standard printed Arabic editions of both works and, where relevant, cross-referenced Indonesian translations to clarify meanings and terminological nuances. ¹⁶ A brief comparative analysis between *Bidayat al-Hidayah* and *Ibya'* was conducted to highlight consistency and development in al-Ghazali's fiqh-sufistic thought. ¹⁷ Finally, this research acknowledges its limitations, namely its dependence on textual sources without involving contemporary community practices, and its scope

¹¹ K Krippendorff, Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology (SAGE Publications, 2013), https://books.google.co.id/books.

¹² Soleymanpour Soleymanpour, Modern Teaching Skill (Tehran: Ahsan, 2009).

¹³ Thid

Wisnu Marta Adipura, "Metodologi Riset Komunikasi: Panduan Untuk Melakukan Penelitian Komunikasi," Jogyakarta: Balai Kajian Dan Pengambangan Informasi Yogyakarta Dan Pusat Kajian Media Dan Budaya Populer, 2008.

¹⁵ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014).

¹⁶ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, ed. Dar al-Ma'rifah (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.); Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Bidayat al-Hidayah, ed. Dar al-Minhaj (Jeddah: Dar al-Minhaj, 2011).

¹⁷ Frank Griffel, Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

restricted to two of al-Ghazali's works, leaving room for further studies that integrate broader textual corpora or ethnographic approaches.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Character and Scope of Figh and Sufism

According to Sayyid Abu Bakar al-Dimyati, a Muslim is required to study three types of religious sciences: First, the science that strengthens belief in God, which is known as the science of tawhid. Second, the science that improves the manner of worship, which is referred to as figh. Third, the science that purifies the heart from reprehensible traits and adorns it with commendable qualities, which is known as tasawwuf.¹⁸

The distinguishing characteristics of fiqh compared to other Islamic sciences are as follows: The foundations of fiqh are the Qur'an, Hadith, *ijma* (consensus), and qiyas (analogy). Fiqh governs all aspects of human life, including vertical relations with God and horizontal relations with fellow human beings. Fiqh encompasses five legal rulings: obligatory (vajib), recommended (sunah), permissible (mubah), forbidden (haram), and discouraged (makruh). Violations of fiqh are subject to sanctions both in this world and the hereafter. Worldly punishments include hudud and ta'zir, while divine punishment is within the exclusive prerogative of Allah. Fiqh can be both rigid and flexible, depending on the context and circumstances. The ultimate aim of fiqh is the welfare (maslahah) of both the worldly life and the hereafter.¹⁹

According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the characteristics of Islamic law are comprehensiveness and realism. Islamic law is not designated for a specific individual, community, or nation, nor is it exclusive to Muslims. Rather, it is universal even extending to idolaters and the people of the Book. Islamic law governs individuals and families in detail, covering matters such as marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, guardianship, and more. It also regulates civil society, including financial and service transactions like buying and selling, leasing, lending and borrowing, and mortgaging. Islamic law further addresses criminal justice, prescribing penalties such as *budud* and *qisas*. It outlines the responsibilities of governments toward their citizens and vice versa, as well as

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¹⁸ Abu Bakar ibn Muhammad al-Dimyati, Kifayah Al-Atqiya (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyah, 2013).

¹⁹ Supriadi, "Fiqih Bernuansa Tasawuf Al-Ghazali Perpaduan Antara Syari'at Dan Hakikat."

international relations in times of peace and war. In summary, Islamic law permeates all aspects of life, leaving nothing untouched.

Islamic law is characterized by realism, meaning that it takes into account human nature and does not disregard real-world circumstances. For example, it does not prohibit what is essential for human life, while it forbids what is harmful. Islamic law considers both the physical and psychological needs of individuals. It permits games and recreation provided they do not involve gambling or lead to neglecting remembrance of God. It also promotes marriage as a legitimate means to fulfill sexual needs and allows polygamy for those capable of maintaining justice.²⁰

Regarding *tasannuf*, Shaykh Abu Nasr al-Tusi maintains that religious knowledge is derived from three sources: the Qur'an, Hadith, and the inner insight (*intuition*) of the saints and friends of Allah.²¹ *Sufism* is also known as the science of the inner self (*'ilm albatin*).²² It addresses inner behavior such as repentance, asceticism, trust in God, sincerity, and contentment. In other words, the focus of sufi studies is the heart purifying it from blameworthy traits and adorning it with virtuous ones.²³

According to Imam Amin al-Kurdi, the foundational principles of Sufism consist of five elements: First, fearing (taqwa) Allah both in solitude and in the presence of others. Second, adhering completely to the Sunnah of the Prophet in all aspects both in speech and in action. Third, turning away from anything other than Allah by constantly cultivating reliance (tawakal) and patience (sabr). Fourth, being content with whatever Allah has bestowed, whether little or much. This is realized through the habitual practice of contentment (qana'ab). Fifth, inabah, a state of returning to Allah in both happiness and distress. This is practiced through gratitude in times of joy and seeking Allah's protection in times of hardship. ²⁴ The study of sufism is considered fard 'ayn (an individual obligation), because no human being is free from inner flaws or spiritual diseases, except the prophets and messengers. The primary focus of Sufism is to eliminate such diseases of the heart. ²⁵

²⁰ Yusuf al-Qardawi, "Al-Ghazali Antara Pro Dan Kontra, Terj," Abrori. Surabaya: Pustaka Progressif, 1996.

²¹ Abu Nasr al-Tusi, Al-Luma' Fi al-Tarikh al-Tasawuf (Mesir: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah, 1960).

²² Amin al-Kurdi, *Tanwir Al-Qulub* (Suriah: Dar al-Qalam, 1991).

²³ Abu Nasr al-Tusi, Al-Luma' Fi al-Tarikh al-Tasawuf (Mesir: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah, 1960).

²⁴ al-Kurdi, *Tanwir Al-Oulub*.

²⁵ Achmad Asrori Al-Ishaqy, *Al-Muntakhabat Fi Ra> Bit*} *Ah al-Qalbiyyah Wa S* {*ilah al-Ru> H*} *Iyyah* (Surabaya: al-Khidmah, 2009).

Several scholars of sufism have attempted to define the characteristics of sufism. Among them is William James, who identified four key features: Abstraction, Inexpressibility in words, Transience, Passivity. Meanwhile, R.M. Bucke proposed seven characteristics of Sufism: Inner illumination, Commendable morlity, Intellectual clarity, A sense of eternal existence, The absence of fear of death, The absence of a sense of sin, The suddenness of mystical experience. Halim Mahmud added that there are several characteristics not addressed by William James and R.M. Bucke, namely: inner peace, spiritual happiness, and contentment with divine will (rida).

The Relationship Between Fiqh and Sufism Before and During the Era of Al-Ghazali

From the perspective of its relationship with the field of Sufism, the historical development of fiqh can be divided into two distinct periods: the pre-Ghazalian and the Ghazalian eras. During the pre-Ghazalian period, the interaction between these two disciplines can be characterized by what may be termed an accommodative relationship pattern. Etymologically, the term accommodative carries two main meanings. First, it refers to a condition in which two individuals or groups maintain a level of mutual adjustment or adherence within a social context. Second, it denotes efforts aimed at reducing or resolving conflicts, whether personal or communal, in order to restore harmony. In this sense, accommodation signifies a dynamic process of reconciliation intended to achieve balance and coexistence between differing orientations, in this case, the legalistic framework of figh and the spiritual-ethical orientation of Sufism. ²⁹

Accommodation can take various forms, each reflecting a different mode of conflict resolution and interaction between parties. It may occur through coercion, in which one side possesses greater power and compels the other to conform, whether through physical dominance or psychological pressure. In other situations, accommodation manifests as compromise, where opposing parties willingly reduce their respective demands to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome. It can also appear as arbitration, a process in which a neutral third party assists in reaching an agreement, or as mediation, where the

28 Ibid.

²⁶ Abu Wafa al-Taftazani, Al-Madkhal Ila Al-Tasawwuf al-Islami (Kairo: Dar al-Tsaqafag, 1979).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁹ Supriadi, "Fiqih Bernuansa Tasawuf Al-Ghazali Perpaduan Antara Syari'at Dan Hakikat."

intermediary merely facilitates communication without imposing a decision. Another form is conciliation, in which the disputing parties themselves consciously seek reconciliation and strive to restore harmony through consensus. Accommodation may also emerge through toleration, typically unplanned, when conflicting sides attempt to neutralize differences without formal negotiation. In some instances, it results in a stalemate, where the conflict remains unresolved because both parties possess equal strength and neither is able to prevail over the other.³⁰

During the time of the Companions (Sahabah), there was no dichotomy between the sciences of fiqh and sufism. In fact, fiqh during that period was oriented toward the hereafter. In the second century of the Hijrah, these two disciplines developed in parallel, complementing one another like two sides of the same coin. This harmonious coexistence is reflected in the famous saying of Imam Malik: "Whoever practices fiqh without practicing sufism is a transgressor (fasiq), and whoever practices Sufism without practicing fiqh is a heretic (zindiq). But whoever combines both has attained the truth."

This sentiment was echoed by Hasan al-Basri when someone referred to a certain individual as a *faqih*. He responded that a *faqih* is not merely someone skilled in *fiqh*, but one who is ascetic in worldly affairs, inclined toward the hereafter, and perceives religious matters with the eye of the heart.³¹ These two figures are well known in their respective fields, Imam Malik in *fiqh* and Hasan al-Basri in sufism, and both emphasized the complementarity of *fiqh* and sufism.

Tensions between fiqh and sufism began to surface in the 3rd century hijriahs. The social conflicts within the Muslim community at the time were not solely due to differing interpretations of religious teachings but also due to cultural influences affecting Islam. The intellectual disputes among scholars grew wider and began to involve the field of Sufism. Abu Nasr al-Tusi describes in his work that the "people of the outward" (ahl alzahir) rejected the "people of the inward" (ahl al-batin), declaring: "We recognize no other knowledge except the outward shari'a based knowledge derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah.". A prominent example of this clash involved Abdullah bin Harith al-Muhasibi, a leading figure in sufism, and Ahmad bin Hanbal, representing fiqh. Both Imam Ahmad and his

31 al-Tusi, Al-Luma' Fi al-Tarikh al-Tasawuf.

32 Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

teacher, Abdul Rahman bin Mahdi, strongly opposed al-Muhasibi's ideas, branding them as misleading innovations (bid'ab).33

Ibn Kathir narrates that Imam Ahmad disliked al-Muhasibi because his teachings excessively emphasized asceticism (zuhud) without grounding in the shari'a. When Abu Zur'ah al-Razi, a student of Ahmad bin Hanbal, brought al-Muhasibi's book al-Ri'ayah, Imam Ahmad reportedly said: "This is a book of bid'ah. Avoid al-Muhasibi, follow Imam Malik, al-Layth, al-Anza'i, and al-Thanri instead." The dispute between ahl al-zahir and ahl al-batin extended even to terminologies such as the term sufi, which ahl al-zahir rejected, arguing that such terminology did not exist during the early generations (salaf), who instead used terms like 'ubbad (devout worshipers), zuhad (ascetics), fuqara (the poor), and salihun (righteous).34

However, when Ahmad ibn Hanbal met and studied under Abu Hamzah al-Baghdadi, he underwent a transformation in his perspective on Sufism. On one occasion, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who is widely recognized as the founder of the Hanbali sect (mazhab) of thought, posed a question to Abu Hamzah al-Baghdadi concerning a matter of sufism. He asked, "What is your view on this issue, O Sufi?" The response given by Abu Hamzah was so profound that it was firmly upheld by Ahmad ibn Hanbal thereafter.³⁵

Nevertheless, another perspective suggests that the dispute between Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Muhasibi was primarily centered on kalam (Islamic theology) does not extend into the domain of sufism. 36 The intersections of sufism with figh and kalam were inevitable due to the integrated nature of Islamic sciences. Sufism, like any other branch of knowledge, cannot stand on its own without the support of other disciplines. The resistance faced by sufism historically testifies to its resilience and capacitysto endure critical scrutiny.37

During the era of al-Ghazali, a functional relationship between sufism and figh was established. Sunni scholars attempted to reframe sufism within the parameters of shari'a so that it could be accepted by jurists (faqib) and theologians. One of the early figures to promote this reconciliation was Abu Nasr al-Tusi, followed by al-Qushayri. Abdul Qadir

³³ Riyadi, Arkeologi Tasawuf.

³⁴ Abu Nasr al-Tusi, Al-Luma' Fi al-Tarikh al-Tasawuf (Mesir: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah, 1960).

³⁵ Abd. Wahab. 1-Sha'rani, Al-Anwar al-Qudsiyah (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2012).

³⁶ Riyadi, Arkeologi Tasawuf.

³⁷ Riyadi, Arkeologi Tasawuf.

Riyadi referred to the Sufi thought of al-Qushayri as "the anchor of shari'a-based Sufism." This conciliatory effort continued into the time of al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali was a towering scholar who succeeded in reconciling sufism with the Qur'an and Sunnah. From this point onward, the relationship between sufism and *fiqh* became functional. ³⁸ Al-Ghazali believed that *fiqh* and sufism must be interrelated. *Fiqh* governs communal life, while sufism purifies the soul of the individual from base desires. Over the course of Islamic intellectual history, the synthesis of sufism and *fiqh* culminated in a harmonious integration. Al-Ghazali played a pivotal role in this integration, promoting a form of *fiqh* that did not merely focus on externalities or subsidiary matters (*furu*), but also embraced inward dimensions and spiritual depth. ³⁹

The Formulation of Al-Ghazali's Figh-Sufistic Thought

In *Bidayat al-Hidayah* and *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, Imam al-Ghazali begins by offering a detailed account of the signs of true religiosity, signs that lead human beings towards God and place ultimate happiness in the Hereafter as the primary goal. To that end, he explains how to properly practice religion, the stages one must pass through, and the efforts that must be made to reach that end.⁴⁰

Al-Ghazali criticizes jurists (fuqaha) who focus solely on outward knowledge and neglect inward sciences. Because their attention is limited to external acts, they fail to consider the spiritual dimensions. Consequently, when asked about matters related to the heart, they respond only with superficial legal analysis. For instance, when questioned about issues such as zihar or li'an or other legal technicalities, they respond at length, elaborating on definitions and rulings with extensive and convoluted explanations. Ironically, these are issues that are relatively insignificant in spiritual importance.⁴¹

In Ihya' Ulum al-Din, al-Ghazali issues a warning to scholars preoccupied with disputational jurisprudence (masa'il khilafiyyah). Many spend volumes discussing such debates, though these issues were not a central concern for the pious predecessors (alsalaf al-salih). Al-Ghazali writes: Be cautious of becoming entangled in juristic disputations (khilafiyyah); avoid them as you would deadly poison. Debating such matters is a spiritual disease that leads jurists to rivalry and self-conceit. It causes one to seek justification for one's own views instead of

³⁸ Masburiyah, "Konsep Dan Sistematika Pemikiran Fiqih Sufistik Al-Ghazali."

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ al-Qardawi, "Al-Ghazali Antara Pro Dan Kontra, Terj."

⁴¹ Ibid.

sincere self-assessment. Turn away from this and instead occupy yourself with reflecting on your own

shortcomings"42

For al-Ghazali, true happiness lies in the hereafter, and this cannot be attained

except by strengthening one's taqua (God-consciousness) and resisting the passions of

the lower self (nafs). Hence, he integrates the outward figh with the inward discipline of

sufism (tasanwuf). He explains the external conditions necessary for an act of worship to

be legally valid, as well as the internal conditions that render it spiritually acceptable. He

writes: "In this book, I will explain the proper etiquette, recommended practices, and inner secrets of

worship matters often neglected by figh. Jurists typically emphasize outward conditions, which may suffice

to fulfill the legal requirement of worship but do not guarantee its acceptance by Allah'43

Al-Ghazali's integration of figh and tasawwuf is firmly rooted in the Qur'an and

Hadith, resulting in a distinctive form of sufi epistemology. His works remain studied

across the Muslim world, in both East and West, not merely for their religious and logical

content, but also for their sincere attempt to articulate a spiritually grounded yet practical

way of life. One clear indicator of his authenticity is that he embodied sufism in his own

life before ever committing it to writing. Al-Ghazali's particular formulation of figh-sufistic,

as seen in Bidayat al-Hidayah and Ihya' Ulum al-Din, serves to ensure that acts of worship

are not only legally valid but also spiritually accepted, thereby purifying the heart one of

the essential aims of religious devotion.

The Legal Output of Figh-Sufistic

One of Al-Ghazali's works in the genre of *figh*-sufistic thought is *Bidayat al-Hidayah*.

The chapters of this book focus exclusively on acts of worship ('ubudiyyah), addressing

only eight core religious practices. Al-Ghazali explicitly states that if the reader seeks more

detailed discussions, they should consult his *Ihya' Ulum al-Din.*⁴⁴

In Bidayat al-Hidayah, Al-Ghazali categorizes legal discussions into three main

sections: Purification (taharah): This section covers istinja', wudu, ghusl, and tayammum, but

omits many other details found in Ihya' Ulum al-Din, making Bidayat al-Hidayah a relatively

concise text in the figh-sufistik tradition. Prayer (salat): This includes discussions on

⁴² Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Ibya>' Ulu>m al-Di>n. I* (Mesir: Maktabah al-Syuruq al-Dauliyah, 2010).

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

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individual prayer (munfarid), congregational prayer (jama'ah), and Friday prayer (jumu'ah), but again in a condensed manner compared to more extensive fiqh-sufistic works like Mizan al-Kubra by al-Sha'rani. ⁴⁵ Fasting (samm): Al-Ghazali encourages frequent supererogatory fasting and notes that those who rarely fast will regret it in the hereafter when they see others in paradise enjoying elevated ranks due to their devotion. ⁴⁶

Distinct from conventional *fiqh* texts, which typically employ terms such as *al-hukm* (legal ruling) or *al-ahkam* (legal rulings), Al-Ghazali introduces the term *adab* (etiquette) in his classification, writing about the *adab* of *wudu*, *salat*, and *sawm*. According to Nawawi al-Bantani, one of the commentators on *Bidayat al-Hidayah*, the term *adab* in this context encompasses both obligations and recommended acts.⁴⁷

The following is the content of Al-Ghazali's fiqh-sufistic thought as presented in his Bidayat al-Hidayah. However, this study will focus solely on its esotetic (batin) dimension, thereby highlighting the distinction between pure fiqh and sufistic. The first recommended act before performing wudu is using a tooth-stick (siwak), which is highly encouraged in the shari'a. Al-Ghazali adds that this act not only pleases Allah but also enrages satan. After using the siwak, the next ritual is the recitation of the basmalah accompanied by a supplication (du'ā'), followed by washing the hands, which is also performed while reciting a specific supplication. Each step of wudu is accompanied by specific supplications, transforming the ablution into an act of remembrance (dhikr) and spiritual purification. Citing a hadith, al-Ghazali states: "Whoever remembers Allah while performing wudu, Allah purifies his entire body. Whoever does not, only the parts touched by water are purified". Such explanations are not typically found in classical works of pure figh.

Such spiritual dimensions are rarely found in purely legal works. Al-Ghazali insists on not neglecting the *sunnah* aspects of *mudu*, as they compensate for deficiencies in the obligatory component. In *Ihya>' Ulum al-Din*, he encourages readers to refer to pure *fiqh* books for further *sunnah* details not included in his *fiqh-sufistic* writings. While drawing from the Shafi'i mazhab, Al-Ghazali maintains that the obligatory elements of *mudu* are

⁴⁵ l-Sha'rani, Al-Anwar al-Qudsiyah.

⁴⁶ Muhammad al-Ghazali, Bida>yat Al-Hida>yah (Surabaya: Maktabah Dar Ihya al-Kutub, 2010).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ al-Ghazali, Ihya>' Ulu>m al-Di>n. I.

⁴⁹ Abu Hasan Al-Daruquthni, "Sunan Al-Daruquthni," Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2004.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ al-Ghazali, Bida>yat Al-Hida>yah.

six: intention, washing the face, washing both arms up to the elbows, wiping part of the head, washing the feet up to the ankles, and proper sequence (*tartib*).

Al-Ghazali wrote that he had elaborated on the intricacies of prayer (*ṣalāt*) in three of his works: *al-Basīt*, *al-Wasīt*, and *al-Wajīz*. Later, in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, he provided a concise summary of what should be observed by anyone performing the prayer, namely, the observance of both its outward and inward etiquettes. The inward etiquette refers to qualities such as presence of heart (*khushīt'*), composure (*ṭuma'nīnah*), sincerity in intention (*ikhlās*), and the like.

Al-Ghazali offers a striking analogy by likening the five daily prayers to a flowing river in front of one's house: if a person bathes in it five times a day, no impurity will remain on his body. In this way, he argues that the five daily prayers serve to cleanse sins, just as water removes physical dirt. However, he emphasizes that only those prayers which are performed with proper inward and outward decorum possess this purifying effect. If, during prayer, the mind wanders to matters unrelated to worship, then such prayer is reduced to mere physical movements, fulfilling only the formal obligation without spiritual substance.⁵² This is in line with the saying of the Prophet Muhammad, as cited by al-Ghazali, that many are those who pray, yet the only thing they attain from it is fatigue.⁵³

Khushū' does not arise spontaneously, rather it must be cultivated through deliberate effort. For this reason, al-Ghazali offers practical guidance for attaining a state of khushū' in prayer. According to him, there are six essential elements that facilitate a mindful and devout prayer: First, awareness (al-yaqzah). This means that during prayer, one's thoughts and emotions must be aligned with the physical act being performed. When the mind is focused on the act of worship, the heart becomes fully engaged, and no distractions are present this constitutes true awareness.

Second, understanding (al-fahm). The worshipper must comprehend the meanings of the words being recited, rather than merely memorizing and repeating them mechanically. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the subtle and profound meanings contained in the Qur'anic verses are more deeply experienced during prayer than outside of it. As a result, the prayer becomes a shield against immoral and indecent behavior, whether harmful to oneself or

³² al-1 attazani, Al- Madkhal Ila Al-1 asawwij al-1slam

⁵² al-Taftazani, Al-Madkhal Ila Al-Tasawwuf al-Islami.

⁵³ Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Ibya*>' *Ulu*>m al-Di>n. I (Mesir: Maktabah al-Syuruq al-Dauliyah, 2010).

others. *Third*, reverence (*al-ta'z̄im*). Reverence, or a sense of veneration, naturally arises in the heart when it is grounded in both awareness and understanding.

Fourth, awe (al-haybah). This feeling surpasses mere reverence. Awe is born of fear and consciousness of God's majesty. Without this fear, one cannot fully appreciate the greatness of Allah. Al-Ghazali explains that awe is closely related to fear, but with a positive connotation. It is a blend of fear and deep respect. Fifth, hope (al-rajā'). Al-Ghazali advises that while praying, one should predominantly be filled with hope that the prayer will be accepted by Allah, rather than fear that it will be rejected. This hopeful disposition instills enthusiasm and motivation in performing the prayer. Sixth, shame (al-ḥayā'). This emotion typically arises from a sense of one's own shortcomings and the recognition of one's many sins. Awareness, understanding, reverence, awe, and hope cannot truly take root in the heart without an underlying sense of shame. This shame fosters humility and sincerity in the presence of the divine.⁵⁴

Fasting that goes beyond merely abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations is the fasting of the pious. This type of fasting requires the fulfillment of six essential conditions: ⁵⁵ First, guarding the eyes from seeing things that are prohibited by the sharia. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The gaze is a poisoned arrow from the arrows of Iblis. Whoever refrains from it out of fear of Allah will experience the sweetness of faith in his heart." ⁵⁶ Second, guarding the tongue from uttering useless words, lying, slandering, and backbiting. Al-Ghazali recommends that one should instead occupy the tongue with the remembrance (dhikr) of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'an.

Third, protecting the ears from listening to unlawful and disliked matters. The Prophet equated the listener with the speaker in wrongdoing, as he said, "The one who backbites and the one who listens to it are partners in sin." In addition to the ears, the fasting person is also required to guard all bodily organs from committing sins and engaging in acts that are forbidden by religion. Fourth, breaking the fast with lawful (halal) food and drink. Fasting holds no value if, at the time of breaking it, one consumes food and drink that are unlawful. Al-Ghazali draws an analogy: consuming forbidden food and drink after fasting is like constructing a palace while simultaneously destroying an entire city. ⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Bida>yat Al-Hida>yah* (Surabaya: Maktabah Dar Ihya al-Kutub, 2010).

⁵⁵ al-Ghazali, Ihya>'Ulu>m al-Di>n. I.

⁵⁶ Abu Abdullah al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak 'ala Sahihain (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1990).

⁵⁷ al-Ghazali, *Ihya*> '*Ulu*>*m al-Di*>*n. I.*

Fifth, avoiding excessiveness during iftar (the breaking of the fast). Al-Ghazali criticizes the common societal habit of serving types of food during Ramadan that are not typically consumed on ordinary days, as such behavior contradicts the fundamental aim of fasting, which is to empty the stomach and restrain desire in order to overcome the influence of satan. Sixth, after iftar, one should instill in the heart a sense of fear (khamf) and hope (raja') regarding whether or not the fast has been accepted by Allah. If accepted, it is a sign of proximity to Allah (among the muqarrabīn), if not, then one is among the losers. According to al-Ghazali, this emotional state of hope and fear should accompany every act of worship.

The Relevance of Figh-Sufistic to Strengthening Religious Moderation

Currently, Islam is facing two internal challenges that originate from within the religion itself: First, the rise of the right-wing Islamic group which tends to be exclusive and harsh towards other groups it perceives as deviating from the true teachings of Islam. This group stands in contrast to the left-wing Islamic group, which is more inclusive, moderate, and tolerant towards both local and international values. Second, there exists a group that is excessively lax in practicing religion. Although they often cite verses from the Qur'an, hadiths, and classical Islamic literature, their understanding tends to be overly textual, lacking contextual sensitivity and historical awareness regarding the circumstances in which the texts were revealed or written.⁵⁸

In essence, Islam has never opened the door to, nor legitimized, extremist thought or action. On the contrary, Islam firmly rejects violence both in its da'wah and in social interactions.⁵⁹ Ibn 'Ashur, as cited by Zuhairi Misrawi, affirms that Islam is a religion of moderation that prioritizes the middle path, rejecting both right and left wing extremities. This middle path is what renders Islam a commendable religion that must be preserved and perpetuated.⁶⁰

Cases of radicalism and violence in the name of Islam, whether at the local or global level, have caused Islam and its adherents to be stigmatized. Consequently, several Islamic

⁵⁸ Muhammad Arifin, "Konsep Al-Qur'an Dalam Gagasan Moderasi Beragama: Menyelaraskan Akhlak Dan Keyakinan," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Ilmu al-Qur'an Dan Hadist* 8, no. 1 (2025).

⁵⁹ M Sanusi Dzulqarnain, "Antara Jihad Dan Terorisme," Makasar: Pustaka As-Sunnah 17 (2011).

⁶⁰ Zuhairi Misrawi, Al-Quran Kitab Toleransi: Inklusivisme, Pluralisme Dan Multikulturalisme (Penerbit Fitrah, 2007).

institutions have begun to focus on classical Islamic literacy as a means of countering the misuse of religious doctrines, especially the concept of jihad, by promoting the value of religious moderation.⁶¹

Safeguarding the implementation of religious moderation is the responsibility of every individual and social group, as it plays a critical role in maintaining national stability. In today's era of openness, extremist doctrines can easily proliferate through various digital platforms. ⁶² The practice of religious moderation in Indonesia is unique and markedly different from other countries. One of the reasons for this uniqueness is that Indonesia's model integrates both the physical and spiritual dimensions, harmonizes reason with divine revelation, and synthesizes classical theoretical frameworks with contemporary realities. ⁶³

Historically, the early generation of righteous scholars (salaf al-salih) provided foundational guidance for the practice of religious moderation. According to their view, religious practice should prevent two types of deviant behavior: First, excessiveness (ifrat) in religious practice, which involves rigidly adhering to the idea that religious teachings are fixed and sacred, thereby leaving no room for reinterpretation. This rigidity leads to religious stagnation, detaching religion from its contextual relevance and hindering efforts to uncover the essence behind religious texts. Second, negligence (iqtisar), the opposite of the former, where sacred texts are interpreted purely based on contemporary understanding, often leading to distortions of the authentic meanings of the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, or classical scholarly opinions. This attitude tends to prioritize reason over the scriptural texts.⁶⁴

Indonesia, as a nation characterized by ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, is internationally recognized as a multicultural country. This diversity presents a dual potential: it can serve as a model of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (mercy to all creation), or it may become a source of internal conflict.⁶⁵ As a preventive measure against the latter risk,

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⁶¹ Andik Wahyun Muqoyyidin, "Membangun Kesadaran Inklusif-Multikultural Untuk Deradikalisasi Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 1 (2013): 131–51.

⁶² M Q Shihab, Wasathiyyah Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama (Lentera Hati, 2019), https://books.google.co.id/books?id=WwfZDwAAQBAJ.

⁶³ M Luqmanul Hakim Habibie et al., "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," MODERATIO: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama 1, no. 1 (2021): 121–41.

⁶⁴ Achmad Satori Ismail, *Islam Moderat: Menebar Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin*, (No Title) (Jakarta: Pustaka Ikada, 2012).

⁶⁵ Muhammad Ainul Yaqin, "Dzikir Manaqib: Moderasi Islam Di Tengah Masyarakat Multikultural," in Proceedings of Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars, 2018, 949–58.

the author proposes a practical step namely, promoting the *fiqh*-sufistic model of Imam al-Ghazali. His approach not only motivates the observance of religious teachings through conventional legal reasoning, but also emphasizes inner spiritual cultivation, prioritizes *fiqh* amidst juristic differences, and encourages engagement in supererogatory worship acts.⁶⁶

In terms of religious practice, Islamic religious moderation encompasses three main aspects: moderation in belief, moderation in worship, and moderation in social interaction.⁶⁷ Thus, ritual worship is not only a vertical communication between the servant and God, but also entails horizontal communication among fellow human beings. The characteristics of a person who practices religious moderation can be identified through ten key traits: tanazun (balance), i'tidal (uprightness), tasamuh (tolerance), tanasut (moderation), shura (consultation), islah (reconciliation), tahaddhur (civility), musanah (egalitarianism), anlaniyah (prioritization), and tatannur na ibtikar (dynamism and innovation).⁶⁸

The primary objective of fiqh-sufism is to cultivate a righteous human being (insan salih), a person worthy of being a vicegerent on earth, fully embodying human virtues while shedding base animalistic traits. This righteous individual becomes the foundation of a righteous family, which in turn builds a righteous society and leads to a righteous community. To achieve this, al-Ghazali offers detailed spiritual guidance through rituals such as prayer. According to him, prayer is legislated by Allah as a means of purifying the soul and softening the heart, performed with reverence (haihah), humility (khushu'), spiritual witnessing (mushahadah), awareness of divine presence (muraqabah), and intimate supplication (munajat). Without these internal dimensions, prayer devolves into a mere mechanical routine devoid of spiritual value.⁶⁹

In his *fiqh*-sufistic works, al-Ghazali outlines inner etiquettes (*adab batiniyyah*) to be observed during prayer so that it generates meaningful social transformation and not just fulfills ritual obligations. This reflects the divine promise that prayer serves to restrain individuals from lewdness and wrongdoing.

⁶⁶ al-Qardawi, "Al-Ghazali Antara Pro Dan Kontra, Terj."

⁶⁷ Abu Yasid, Membangun Islam Tengah (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pesantren, 2010).

⁶⁸ Afrizal Nur, "Konsep Wasathiyah Dalam Al-Quran; (Studi Komparatif Antara Tafsir Al-Tahrir Wa At-Tanwir Dan Aisar At-Tafasir)," *Jurnal An-Nur* 4, no. 2 (2015).

⁶⁹ Muhammad al-Ghazali, Bida>yat Al-Hida>yah (Surabaya: Maktabah Dar Ihya al-Kutub, 2010).

Such spiritually grounded practices foster balanced vertical and horizontal relationships, nurturing qualities such as tolerance, moderation, and civility hallmarks of someone who practices religious tolerance in daily life. Al-Ghazali's *fiqh*-sufistic works never abandon the *shari'ah*; rather, their distinctiveness lies in emphasizing inner experience in worship. While most classical works focus on attaining eternal bliss in the afterlife, al-Ghazali also addresses worldly dimensions by uncovering the manners and secrets within religious practices.⁷⁰

Regarding fasting, al-Ghazali views it as more than abstaining from food, drink, and marital relations from dawn to dusk. While linguistically fasting indeed means "to abstain," al-Ghazali expands this definition to include restraining all limbs from sinful actions disliked by Allah. When practiced properly, fasting becomes not only a means of self-purification but also a way to safeguard others family and society from the practitioner's harmful behavior. Hence, religious rituals in Islam are not only acts of devotion to God but also carry ethical and social dimensions, provided they are performed with spiritual awareness. Islam inherently teaches equality in all aspects of life, including social and gender equality. Human dignity is not determined by gender or social class but by piety. Islam also encourages the development of intellectual understanding, mindset, and social interaction. The aim is for Muslims to comprehend social realities, appreciate diversity, and prioritize unity. The aim is for Muslims to comprehend social realities, appreciate diversity, and prioritize unity.

In relation to religious moderation, in his two seminal fiqh-sufistic works, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* and *Bidayat al-Hidayah*, al-Ghazali places great emphasis on social ethics (*al-suhbah*) a theme rarely addressed by scholars of fiqh. Al-Ghazali even delineates 23 specific manners of social interaction, including: prioritizing others over oneself, being helpful, keeping secrets, concealing others' flaws, avoiding slander, praising others, being a good listener, avoiding disputes, addressing people with preferred names, expressing gratitude, defending friends, offering advice when requested, being forgiving, praying for others, maintaining communication, and more. ⁷³ Al-Ghazali offers a succinct guideline for fostering harmony in social relations: "*Meet others with a cheerful face and a smile, not out of*

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⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷² Muhammad Arifin, "Konsep Al-Qur'an Dalam Gagasan Moderasi Beragama: Menyelaraskan Akhlak Dan Keyakinan," Al-Bayan: Jurnal Ilmu al-Qur'an Dan Hadist 8, no. 1 (2025).

⁷³ Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Ibya*> '*Ulu*> m al-Di>n. I (Mesir: Maktabah al-Syuruq al-Dauliyah, 2010).

inferiority or fear. Interact with firmness and courage, not arrogance. Be gentle with others, but do not demean yourself.".74

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis presented in the previous chapters, this study concludes that figh-sufistic represents an integration of figh and sufism, combining the outward discipline of legal rulings with the inward purification of the heart, thus offering a holistic framework for religious practice. Unlike pure figh that often focuses on formal obligations, al-Ghazālī emphasizes the balance between external requirements and internal conditions, replacing the legalistic terminology of al-ahkām with the ethical language of al-adab. His approach deliberately avoids khilāfiyah (legal disputation), which he viewed as unproductive and devoid of spiritual depth. Central to his framework is the concept of ethical companionship (al-shuhbah), through which he formulated twenty-three social guidelines that highlight equality, intellectual development, critical thinking, and inclusivity. These principles extend the scope of worship into social life, demonstrating that religious devotion must also foster respect for diversity and strengthen communal harmony. In the context of Indonesia, al-Ghazālī's fiqh-sufistic thought offers a valuable resource for promoting religious moderation, providing both a spiritual foundation and practical indicators that can be operationalized in educational curricula, civic engagement, and deradicalization initiatives.

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⁷⁴ Ibid.

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